



METRO Blue Line Extension

Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee Meeting

September 15, 2021

6:00 PM

WebEx

CAC Members: Kathy Fraser, Jason Greenberg, Scott Booher, Giuseppe Marrari, Catherine Fleming, Adam Hutchens, John Wolhaupter, Ellis Beck, Brett Buckner

Agency Staff and Guests: Sophia Ginis, Sam O'Connell, Jason Tintes, Andrew Gillett, Dan Soler, Jim Voll, Joan Vanhala, Kerri Ruch, Kristine Stehly, Nick Landwer, Trevor Roy, Sarah Abe, Liz Morice, Call in # 6129****62

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions

Sophia Ginis, Metropolitan Council, called a meeting to order at 6:03 PM.

2. Adopt Meeting Minutes:

Jason Greenberg, Committee Co-Chair asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Brett Buckner moved to approve the minutes and Adam Hutchens seconded.

3. Public Engagement: What We Heard Summer 2021

Sophia Ginis shared an update on summer engagement. In July and August there were 45 public events including open houses, pop-up and door knocking. There were around 2,000 points of contact and 222 comments on the interactive map.

Sophia shared feedback around station study areas. There was general confirmation of the stations with some comments in Minneapolis asking for them to be closer together. Each city had different feedback around the visualizations. For Brooklyn Park, there were questions around Park-and-Ride placement and site design. In Crystal there were questions around roadway design and the pedestrian experience. In Robbinsdale there were combinations of these questions and concerns around community cohesion. For Minneapolis, turn lanes and intersections, biking, parking, and pedestrian accommodations were also of interest.

4. County Road 81 Update

Nick Landwer, Metropolitan Council, shared visualizations for three options for routes near North Memorial. The first option showed the light rail on an elevated structure that is center running at North Memorial. Option 2 showed an option which would curve over and above the Victory Memorial Parkway with a connection to the park and a slightly easier connection to the hospital. The third option was for connection to the Lowry Route which would have a similar connection to the Hospital as Option 1, but it would not serve the park as well in Option 2. Kathy Fraser asked if any one option will serve more people. Nick said that Option 2 would serve the trail connections and that is the main difference between 1 and 2. Jason Greenberg asked what options there were for at-grade. Nick Landwer said they have looked at at-grade because of space they are more impactful to the frontage road which is important for the hospital. John Wolhaupter asked if in option two, is there an option to have a pedestrian infrastructure over County Road 81 to improve access. Nick said they haven't looked into that yet, but for the pedestrian bridge to come over the ramp needs a lot of space.

Brett Buckner asked a question about Robbinsdale's general opinion of light rail at this time and what options are if they continue to get pushback. There was a recent Star Tribune article about this. Nick said that they are getting some questions about this dividing Robbinsdale. Nick said they are asking for feedback on what other options people see and they are not hearing any other options than County Road 81. Brett Buckner shared that his concern is that people may dig in their heels due to concern for Robbinsdale.

Dan Soler, Hennepin County, shared that in general Robbinsdale has been supportive as a city of light rail. They continue to support a route along the railway. Hennepin County and Met Council said they do not think that is feasible and made a decision to plan a new project, one that serves the heart of North Minneapolis. Ultimately, policymakers will be making the decision about moving forward on this project. The goal is not to make everyone love it, but to make sure there is a balance of benefits and impacts. Jason Greenberg said that what he's hearing is a lot of questions on specifics that the project does not have the answers to yet. Dan Soler said they are working on figuring out the answers and that is part of getting to municipal consent.

Catherine Fleming shared a list of community questions including who is building this train, what the materials will be, what opportunities there will be for local jobs and training. She said that she is looking at the RFPs on their website, and there is a lot of groundwork (as in work in the ground in testing and construction). She is wondering what minority-owned and disadvantaged business opportunities there are. Sam O'Connell, Metropolitan Council, shared that they are doing work on their list of disadvantage business enterprises to make sure they are able to support, recruit and provide resources to these organizations. Sophia Ginis confirmed they will do work on this, and there will be follow-up to Catherine's questions.

Jason Greenberg asked about elevated options in Robbinsdale. Nick Landwer said they are looking into this. There are grade issues in Robbinsdale to bring it up to grade takes space. He said that they do have examples of this, and there is not a lot of interest. Adam Hutchens said let's not elevate in Robbinsdale if it won't be done in Minneapolis.

Nick Landwer reviewed the Bass Lake Road Intersection and the design options there. He showed an example that would have a diamond intersection at Bass Lake Road which would

elevate vehicle traffic and light rail would remain at-grade. It would have advantages for traffic because there would be no traffic light. There would be a light for the train crossing. This would be only every 5 minutes and would last seconds.

Catherine Fleming asked how big a station is at this site. Nick explained the stations are standard sizes to fit three-consist trains. It would be around 17 feet wide. The gray on the end show in the diagram is for a pedestrian ramp. Catherine asked if people could shop there. Nick said there is not a lot of room there. Sophia said that they only have a few examples of stations that are in other areas of the system. There is not room for the kiosks or stands you seen in other systems (New York, Chicago). Jason clarified that the station access will be at-grade. Nick said yes, the vehicles on County Road 81 would not stop. The LRT and crossing traffic at Bass Lake Road will have to coordinate with each other. Nick said there will be more visuals to come here. Nick shared an update on the considerations for the Crystal Airport including coordination with the MAC and FAA for permits around the Crystal Airport. Nick also highlighted that there will be updates to visuals in upcoming open houses in Crystal and Robbinsdale.

5. Minneapolis Update

Dan Soler shared some updates in the progress of determining a route. He emphasized there is work to be done to fully understanding the benefits and impacts. He reviewed work completed so far. This includes determining the main options: West Broadway and Washington/Lowry. Next, they determined station study areas for each route. They are currently determining the evaluation criteria to determine between these routes. They are currently advancing design details including station configurations and locations as well as intersections. These are both important for property impacts.

They are putting together, considering many different sets of information for this evaluation including land use, equity considerations, community demographics, traffic and parking information and Right-of-Way impacts. Dan Soler emphasized that Right-of-Way impacts are an important topic here. There will be minor impacts and then there are properties that need to be acquired. That is the evaluation side.

He shared that there will be upcoming community design workshops. Design is advancing to be able to work on and understand fully the impacts and the options. There will be detailed design drawings and they will be brought forward at those. Catherine Fleming asked where construction would begin. Dan said this is currently unknown. He said he could guess there will be work happening in multiple places at one time. Adam Hutchens asked if they've thought about a pedestrian-level booth that people could walk by on either end of the line. Dan said yes, we have been looking at that. For the workshops, they have considered pairing it with office hours. They do not know if they would do a full day or what length of time, but they are looking into it. Adam suggested taking a bus that could move around. Sam O'Connell, Metropolitan Council, said that is exactly right. There is a community bus for that purpose. The bus has display boards inside instead of seats. Jason Greenberg said it would be good to have information on trade-offs. Adam Huchens said it would be good to have visuals paired with this.

6. Project Schedule

Sam O'Connell shared some updates on what to expect in the coming weeks in terms of milestones. There will be community workshops in the fall, starting in September. The past year

they have pulled this project together and made a change to investigate these new route options. The December 2021: Draft Report will be a culmination of the community engagement and technical work. There will be a 45-day comment period (longer to accommodate for the holidays). After this the comments will be incorporated. After there will be a final report in March. Sam highlighted some of the content that would be in the Route Modification Report. This would include the project history, process summary and evaluation of the routes.

7. Anti-Displacement Facilitator Selection Update

Dan Soler shared an update on the facilitator selection. He summarized a lot of concerns around displacement, initially heard in 2021. Hennepin County and the Metropolitan Council put together a plan for an Anti-Displacement Working Group. The RFP went through community review and the selection committee, which included members of the CAC and BAC, who selected CURA. They will be supported by Allison Bell from Bellwether Consulting and Margaret Kaplan from Housing Justice Center. There are a few more steps and the work will be beginning in October. Reminder is that this is not the work group but will be the facilitator for the Anti-displacement working group; that group will include community, private sector experts, local government agencies, philanthropic organizations and the project team staff.

8. Next meetings: Wednesday, October 6 and November 10.

The regularly scheduled BAC meeting would be on election day, so the meetings are being shifted. Adam Hutchens asked when there would be in-person meetings. Sophia said there would be some in person open houses. It would be great to have an in-person committee meeting in November. Right now, the direction from the governor is that they shouldn't be in person through October. Committee members showed a thumbs up.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Chat

No chat comments.